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ABSTRACT

The study compares the problems perceived by leader, non-leader, and deviant adolescents. A total of 2,948 secondary school students in the West Vancouver School District, British Columbia, were divided into three behavior groups and an analysis was made of the problems checked on the Mooney Problem Check List (MPCL) by members of each group. The authors concluded that: (1) adolescents who hold leadership positions perceive themselves as having fewer problems than deviant students; (2) leaders did not score lower on the MPCL than non-leaders, suggesting that these groups have similar perceptions about their world and themselves; (3) girls had significantly lower scores on the MPCL than boys; and (4) the manner in which an individual perceives his world is closely related to his behavior. Tables are included. (Author/SES)

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PERCEIVED PROBLEMS OF LEADER, NON-LEADER AND DEVIANT ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The study compares the problems perceived by leader, non-leader and deviant adolescents. Two thousand, nine hundred and forty-eight secondary school students took the Mooney Problem Check List. The students were divided into three behavior groups and an analysis was made of the number of problems checked, both in total and by sub-scale, between the three groups. The leader group indicated the lowest number of problems while the deviant group checked the most problems. Significant differences on the subtests between the leadership and the deviant adolescents occurred on the dimensions of the curriculum, the future, morals and religions, courtship, sex and marriage, and finances and employment.

Adolescence is a unique period of transition. As part of that transition comes a shift away from the preceding generation, toward one's own generation. Parental control is in its waning days and there is an emergence of a strong affiliation with the teen-age culture. Adolescent leaders strongly influence the attitudes and behavior of the teenager and his culture. It appeared interesting and worthwhile to investigate whether or not adolescent leaders perceive themselves as having less problems than non-leaders and deviants.

It appeared reasonable to assume that the leadership group would have less perceived problems, and be more personally adjusted than non-leader and deviant adolescents. Thus is is hypothesized that

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adolescent leaders will check significantly less problems on the Mooney Problem Check List than non-leaders and deviants. Deviants will check the largest number of problems.

Review of the Literature

No study on the perceived problems of leader, non-leader and deviant adolescents is reported in the literature. Some related studies have been conducted. Barnett and Tarver (1959) found that delinquent girls checked significantly more problems on all subscales with the exception of the boy-girl relations scale of the Mooney Problem Check List (MPCL) than did non-delinquent girls. Esper (1964) reports that students referred by teachers for counselling manifested a greater number of problems in the school subscale on the MPCL than did those who were not referred. De.Sena (1966), Brown (1953) and Abel and Gingles (1965) found that low achieving students checked a significantly greater number of problems on the MPCL than the high achieving students.

The Instrument

The Mooney Problem Check List, Form HM, (Mooney, 1950) was employed as the research instrument. It is widely used by counsellors in High School and University and consists of 330 problems divided into 11 problem areas. The procedure is simple. Students read through the Check List and underline the problems that are of concern to them.

Sample

All the students, grades 8 to 12, in the West Vancouver School District, British Columbia, Canada, were tested. Two thousand, nine hundred and forty-eight students were included in the sample.

The sample was divided into three behavior groups which were obtained in the following manner.

Group I - Student Leaders

Members held an executive position in a club, team or some organization within the school such as the student's council.

Group II - Non-Leaders

Members consisted of students who did not qualify for either Group I or Group III.

Group III - Deviant

Members were designated on the basis of the combination of any two of the following criteria. All the criteria were restricted to a three month period beginning September, 1969 to the end of December, 1969.

(1) Referral from two different teachers to the vice-principal for misbehavior

(2) Two instances of truancy from the school

(3) Eight or more "lates" to school

(4) More than 10 days absences without bonafide permission.

The number of students in group I was 374; group II was 2380, and group III, 194.

Results

Table I shows MPCL Means and Standard Deviations for the three groups described.

TABLE I

Means and Standard Deviations

Group	N	M	S.D
Leader	374	47.57	27.39
Non-Leader	2380	50.02	29.56
Deviant	194	58.64	34.00

An analysis of variance with unequal cell sizes was performed to test the significance of differences found.

The hypothesis that leaders would score lower on the MPCL than would the deviant group was clearly confirmed. ($F=19.52$; $P < .001$)

The hypothesis that leaders would score lower on the MPCL than would the non-leader group was not supported ($F=0.89$; $p > .05$).

The hypothesis that non-leaders would score lower on the MPCL than would the deviant group was confirmed. ($F=20.73$; $P < .001$).

A further analysis of the data showed that regardless of the group placement, girls had significantly lower scores on the MPCL than boys. ($F=49.32$; $P > .001$)

Table II shows the frequency of problems and standard deviations within the eleven behavioral areas for the leadership, non-leadership and deviant groups and Table III provides the t - teast of differences for leadership and deviant groups.

TABLE II

Means and Standard Deviations on MPCL Subtests

Subtest	Leader		Non-Leader		Deviant	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Health	3.74	2.77	3.99	2.80	4.42	3.02
Finances	3.20	2.80	3.39	2.77	4.40	3.46
Social	4.53	3.65	4.42	3.45	4.35	3.41
Relations	3.19	3.10	3.09	3.04	3.84	3.89
Personal	4.48	4.00	4.83	4.20	4.95	3.94
Courtship	4.36	3.50	4.64	3.90	5.57	4.67
Home	4.25	3.25	4.29	3.43	4.65	3.74
Morals	3.33	3.87	3.62	3.81	5.26	4.93
School	3.60	3.38	3.81	3.43	3.99	3.60
Future	5.76	4.19	6.54	4.75	8.28	5.53
Curriculum	7.13	5.15	7.21	5.43	8.93	5.79

TABLE III

t-Tests for differences on MPCL subtests for leadership and deviant group

Subtest	t	df	P
Health	2.72	566	< 0.05
Finances	4.51	"	< 0.05
Social	.57	"	> 0.05
Relations	2.18	"	> 0.05
Personal	1.34	"	> 0.05
Courtship	3.49	"	< 0.05
Home	1.33	"	> 0.05
Morals	5.15	"	< 0.05
School	1.29	"	> 0.05
Future	6.21	"	< 0.05
Curriculum	3.78	"	< 0.05

As is shown on tables II and III, the deviant group varies significantly from the leader group on the subtests Finances and employment, Courtship, six and marriage, Morals and religion, the Future and the Curriculum and Teaching procedures.

There are no significant differences between the scores of the leadership group and the normal group on any of the subtests.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings seem to support the following conclusions:

First, the hypothesis that adolescents who hold leadership positions perceive themselves as having less problems than deviant students was supported ($P < .001$). This would suggest that adolescent leaders are more acceptant of their environment, less anxious and better able to cope with

their world. The cluster of problems which were associated with the deviant adolescent include a fear of not being able to find good occupational and educational opportunities and not knowing where he belongs in the world. He is unable to deal effectively with the elements of school and home discipline. In the area of Courtship, Sex and Marriage, the deviant adolescent seems to have a relatively narrow range of boy and girl relations. He has a tendancy to check items such as "going steady", "boy friend", "deciding whether I'm in love", "marriage", "putting off marriage", and "disappointment in a love affair". These items seem to suggest that the deviant adolescent perceives himself as having a larger than usual number of problems in this area.

Correspondingly, few problems are emphasized in the field of social and recreational activities, implying that social life is not strongly established for the purpose of recreation and fun. The deviant adolescent has little interest in the usual athletic activities. He perceives the school as conducting arbitrary discipline, arbitrary testing and grading, having incompetent teachers who have little interest in the students as personalities and perceives the school generally as having inadequate supplementary provisions such as no suitable places to study, poor assemblies and lunch hours too short.

Secondly, the hypothesis that the leader would score lower on the MPCL than non-leaders was not supported. ($F=0.89$; $P > .05$). This would suggest that adolescent leaders have similar perceptions about their world and themselves as do non-leaders.

Thirdly, girls had significantly lower scores on MPCL than boys ($F=49.32$; $P > .001$). This finding suggests that the demands of the school and community are more amenable to adolescent girls than adolescent boys.

Boys perceive themselves as having significantly more problems than girls in attempting to cope with their educational and social environment.

Fourthly, this study confirms the notion that how an individual perceives his world is closely related to his behavior. That is to say, if an individual characterizes and perceives his world as unjust, insensitive, intolerant and unsuitable to his social and personal well-being, he is likely to engage in behaviors which are socially unacceptable or deviant. On the other hand, if an individual perceives his world as just, sensitive, tolerant and appropriate for social and personal well-being, he is likely to engage in behaviors which are considered appropriate by his society.

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